



PROJECT PROFILE

GIBSON'S PUBLIC MARKET



REDEFINING THE "FARMERS' MARKET" INTO A MODERN, ECONOMIC ENGINE

THE CONCEPT OF A TRADITIONAL farmers' market – local growers selling produce in an empty lot on a Saturday – is being turned on its head.

Across BC, the model of farmer markets is evolving into sophisticated, permanent facilities that serve as incubators for new farmers and small-scale food producers looking to refine their products and grow their business.

One of the best (and newest) is the Gibsons Public Market (GPM). Since opening its doors in late April 2017, the accolades have been flooding in, and merchants at the GPM are embracing the opportunity to use the crowds to develop customers, products, and new markets.

Art Meets Chocolate is one of those market vendors, looking to grow a company that distributes nationally.

Their product is top-quality, hand-crafted chocolate. But the differentiation is their packaging: every variety of chocolate bar on the display wall in their market stall is wrapped in a beautiful piece of BC artwork. These unique wrappers are matched to products and places, and the company is planning an expansion that would see the products sold in gift shops – including airports – across the country.

WE'RE NOT ONLY A DESTINATION FOR SUNSHINE COAST RESIDENTS, WE'RE ALSO DRAWING SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS FROM VANCOUVER. PEOPLE COME TO THE MARKET, SHOP, EAT, LEARN, EXPLORE, AND THEN STAY TO SHOP IN OTHER BUSINESSES AROUND THE REGION

"We already have more than 15 retailers, and we're selling quite a bit through art galleries, and private label editions," said Art Meets Chocolate founder Sylvia Pungutzky. "Moving into the Gibsons Public Market gave us a permanent home, kitchen facilities, shipping, and a head office."

The company, started by Sylvia and her husband, has now grown to add three employees, all Gibsons locals. "It's exciting to work with young, motivated, ambitious people,"

she said. "They're such hard workers, and it makes me happy to give these young people a chance."

Next on the agenda for the Market is the completion and opening of the Nicholas Sonntag Marine Education Centre, slated for early summer. The facility is modelled on places like the Ucluelet Aquarium, where visitors can touch the spines of a prickly sea urchin or smell a watermelon-scented nudibranch, rather than just watching it through a glass tank.

Gerry Zipursky is the Executive Director of the GPM, and he's seen first-hand how it has driven economic activity in the region. "Local businesses have told us that they've seen a definite spike in numbers since the Market opened," Zipursky said. "We're not only a destination for Sunshine Coast residents, we're also drawing significant numbers from Vancouver. People come to the market, shop, eat, learn, explore, and then stay to shop in other businesses around the region."

The businesses operating in the Market also embrace the 'buy local' ethos, sourcing their supplies from other merchants in the hall. Emelle's Bistro – part of the Vancouver-based catering company of the same name – gets meat from The Gibsons Butcher, and fish from the Fisherman's Market.

Zipursky spoke about one of the seven current anchor tenants: Fisherman's Market. "It's a great example of a family business that has its roots here, and has grown to several locations around BC," he said. "With the space here at GPM, they have been able to bring their business back home, creating jobs and opportunity in their local community."

The Market's unofficial role as a business incubator isn't accidental. The market was designed as a community project that inspires and supports economic activities in the region. But it's more than just a space for business. With amenities like a community kitchen, space for arts and performance, a marine education centre and more, the Gibsons Public Market is showing its commitment to community and vitality with a triple-bottom line of social, environmental, and financial success.

